

# *Quarterly* **News = Letter**

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No. 3

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**BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA**  
*545 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California 94102*

FOUNDED in 1912, The Book Club of California is a non-profit association of booklovers and collectors who have a special interest in Pacific Coast history, literature, and fine printing. Its chief aims are to further the interests of book collectors and to promote an understanding and appreciation of fine books.

The Club is limited to 950 members. When vacancies exist membership is open to all who are in sympathy with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Regular membership involves no responsibilities beyond payment of the annual dues. Dues date from the month of the member's election. Regular membership is \$30; Sustaining \$50; Patron \$125.

Members receive the *Quarterly News-Letter* and all parts of the current Keepsake series. They have the privilege, but not the obligation, of buying the Club publications, which are limited, as a rule, to one copy per member.

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### *Quarterly News-Letter*

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Extra copies of Keepsakes or News-Letters, when available, are sold to members at \$1.00 each. Membership dues and contributions (including books and documents) are deductible in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code.

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# *Quarterly News-Letter*

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## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

*Warren R. Howell*

I

HAVE very much enjoyed being President of The Book Club of California for the past two years, and I welcome this opportunity to express my appreciation for the support given to me by the Board of Directors, the Standing Committees and all of the members. To our Executive Secretaries Teressa Fryworth and her successor Gaye Kelly, and Assistant Secretary Madeleine Rose go special thanks for their commendable service and the outstanding public relations job they have done for The Book Club.

I am sure that all of us associated with The Book Club take great pride in the quality of our publications and the outstanding exhibits during these past two years.

*The Coverdale Bible* was so well-received that it went out of print immediately, as did all our other new publications. Of our past titles, the number of unsubscribed copies has been reduced from 415 to 92. All of these titles are bringing premium prices when they come on the antiquarian market.

We have seen an increase in the number of Patron and Sustaining Members, which reflects an increased commitment on their part toward implementing the creative aims of the Club.

As the son of one of the founding members of The Book Club of California, I have long had an interest in the activities of this organization. Over these past two years of my term I have felt greatly involved in every aspect of the Club's work and progress. This involvement has been a most rewarding experience, and even though I am now passing the responsibilities of my office on to Mrs. Harold Wollenberg, I can assure you that I will continue to give energy to the activities of The Book Club. It has been a privilege for me to serve as your president, and I am grateful to all of you for your support during my tenure.



### AND THEN THE BOOKSHOPS STARTED DYING

*by John Hunter*

I USED to dream of being a book collector and building a splendid private library — a sumptuous collection, various, mostly literary, of some eight or ten thousand volumes. No more than that. It was to be a reading library, above all, with a case or two of especially choice items here and there, and row after row of respectable old hardbound editions of things I wanted to read, now or someday. And big comfortable leather chairs to fall asleep in. A number of things encouraged me in such a dream. I think I was born book-

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Reprinted from *Occasional Notes*, Norlin Library, University of Colorado, Boulder, May 1973. John Hunter is Professor of English, U. of Colorado.

hungry and book-faithful, and one of my earliest memories is of telling someone that "it must be true, 'cause I read it in *my* book." But the acquisitive impulse remained mostly latent in Southern California, where I was raised. There the warp of existence was defined by benign sunshine, placid seashores (how apt the name Pacific), and the miles and miles of highway that finally made it all ugly. No, Long Beach was not exactly bookish: I remember in the first year of high school being advised not to read quite so much, I think for the sake of something called my "adjustment." The instructor was particularly worried that I was reading so much Aldous Huxley. In such a context one is not encouraged to collect books.

One day, however, while I was cutting school to go to the Main Library downtown, I stumbled instead into Bertrand Smith's Acres of Books. It had been mouldering around the corner from the library for years, but I had never seen it; and it became my first important bookstore. Smith's was the perfect Southern California bookstore—it went on and on, literally for acres; but there seemed little plan and there wasn't really very much to find in it. Nevertheless, it was an excellent training ground, and a fine defense against what was then called "progressive education." I spent countless afternoons there, learning to read titles in impossible light, discovering how to spot the one interesting thing in a section of otherwise worthless stuff, and perching on top of tipsy ladders under naked light bulbs, reading for hours at a time—all that rather than going to Mechanical Drawing or Senior Problems. And there I not only learned that things like philosophy existed—but even *Chinese* philosophy, which Mrs. Payne of Senior Problems never taught me. I still have a copy of Arthur Waley's *Three Ways of Thought from Ancient China* from Smith's, a number of other tattered volumes, and many pleasant memories.

It was when I went up north to the university in Berkeley, however, that I really began to go book-crazy. The Morrison Room of

the university library had a lot to do with it—an absolute oasis for the poor undergraduate living in a desert of barren rented rooms. Lofty ceilings, beautiful wainscoting and panelling, high windows in from which wafted the sweet smell of rustling eucalyptus; deep oriental rugs, plush sofas and my leather chairs, old-fashioned library tables piled high with *Punch*, *The New Yorker*, *T.L.S.*, and huge art books; and all around the room in oak cases, two tiers high on one side, every novel or volume of poetry or biography a man might care to read in ten years—gift editions, mostly, and all very fine. Also unmarked, as the atmosphere was unmarred; for one of the best things about the Morrison was that it was by rule a place for leisure reading, contemplation, or a nap. One could, indeed, positively snore in peace, book in lap; but if one brought out a notebook or especially a pencil, an attendant quietly swept down upon him. So the Morrison was quite without that feeling of nerves and must-get-it-done that plagues many university and college libraries. It still remains very much my idea of what a library should be, a very special kind of environment.

There were also, of course, the bookstores of the Bay Area, which were both a revelation and an embarrassment of riches. Creed's, for instance, in Berkeley, a jumble like Bertrand Smith's; in fact even more topsy-turvy, but with far better pickings, if you didn't mind working such ground. Book people tended to be a bit snobbish about poor Creed's and its Caligari shelves. Farther down Telegraph Avenue, little Farrell's, well-organized and run by a vainly self-educated bantamweight man who liked to talk books and loved to argue politics. There you would occasionally find something quite good, like my Taine's *Histoire*. Down in Oakland, the superb Holmes Book Company, probably the all-around best bookshop in the Bay Area, and like a commercial version of the Morrison Room—lofty and open, with fine wooden cases and creaky wooden floors, and tiers and levels and entire floors of extraordinarily well-ordered, high-quality books. One went to Holmes

to find something specific, say Darwin's *Letters*; and one came back having found it—and at least two other books as well—always.

Over in San Francisco there was then every possible kind of bookshop, from elegant Newbegin's on Union Square, where I used to haunt deluxe editions of long-out-of-print Augustan writers, to stores like the Porpoise, out in the Clement Street Russian district. On one of those cold, wet, City days you could go for borsch and piroshki, then stop in at the Porpoise for a look at a new botanical print (the owner was also a printmaker and ran a private press) and a purchase of something like Thackeray's *Unidentified Contributions to "Punch."* As was the case in many San Francisco shops, at the Porpoise the man always wrapped your books neatly in paper and left a little loop in the string—for your finger, I always assumed.

Obviously, collecting books gets associated in your mind with other good things, like piroshki and elegance, neat packages and old wood. This is especially true if one is reading in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at the time one begins collecting. Again and again, as you line your shelves with Victorian novels, you are encouraged to believe in a cozy world where books are the very center of civilized existence; sometimes so much so that the affairs of state must wait upon them, as in Trollope's famous opening of *Barchester Towers*. The ministry is out, but is the crusty old Prime Minister, the Earl of ——, framing "eloquent appeals" and "indignant remonstrances," "his fine eye lit up with anger," as he thinks of his heavy associates? "No: history and truth compel me to deny it. He was sitting easily in a lounging chair, conning over a Newmarket list, and by his elbow on the table was lying open an uncut French novel on which he was engaged."

Or again, there is that wonderful, book-bewildered London world so dominated by Dr. Johnson, a century before Trollope. Try to think of Johnson, the quintessential literary man, without

thinking also of the whirl of literary and social London, and of books, books, more books: like that one in the Doctor's lap at the London publisher's dinner, which he picked up when conversation flagged or became dull, to read "ravenously, as if he devoured it"; or like the books in Johnson's own library, itself formerly the warehouse of a London bookseller, and now a place filled with inexplicable chemical apparatus, "manuscript leaves in Johnson's own handwriting" (even manuscript of *Rambler* papers! as Bozzy excitedly notes), and "a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion." How substantial Boswell makes it all seem—that special place where town, talk, books, and civilization meld into a single image.

All these things help to explain how a person comes to collect books and the shape his collecting takes. Nothing exists like Trollope's world or Boswell's London, of course, and in a way they never did exist. But between images from books, my various bookshops, and the Morrison Library (and later the majestic Huntington, the regal Folger), the image of my own library, which is really an image of a perfect, very clubbable private club, built up. Besides, a touch of that friendly and bibliolatrous world authors evoke did exist in San Francisco; and some of it still does. There were shops like the Compass, on Clay Street, right around the corner from the old police station—in a fine, raffish neighborhood, that is, of bail bondsmen, shady ladies, and other interesting types. It was run by an odd old duck who always wore a fez and fancy slippers, and seemed to have stepped out of a Phiz illustration; and he used to serve good Turkish coffee and sometimes Turkish cigarettes to people like myself, who were desperately literary enough to be writing poetry. Or there is still that lively center of bookish activity on Columbus: all in a row, the Discovery Bookshop, Vesuvio's Coffee House (with nineteenth-century cuties on slides, great steamed beer, and enormous, womb-like rattan chairs), and the City Lights. The Discovery for criticism or a modern first, Vesu-

vio's for conversation, and the City Lights for what you will: it has been my favorite of all paperback stores, with plenty of Dovers, the San Francisco poets, every literary periodical or counter-cultural paper, Zen cookery and Dashiell Hammett, tables for reading and writing, and bulletin boards with fascinating messages. ("San Francisco novelist, broke, wants quiet place to write during day, in exchange for minor housekeeping. No pets. Prefer North Beach in mornings.") Such a context encourages one to build a library.

It gets harder and harder to do so, because some time in the past five or six years the bookshops started dying. Not just in San Francisco and Berkeley, though of the ones I mentioned above, Creed's is gone, and Farrell's, Newbegin's, the old Compass, and the Porpoise. Evidently, all around the country the kind of shop I mean is disappearing—either folding up completely, or moving out to a suburban shopping center to sell stationery, Sierra Club posters, and paperbacks. I'm not sure why they are dying, though the reasons are probably not hard to find. They are mostly city shops, and nothing does well in the cities these days. And deeply connected to that, of course, is the simple fact that literature isn't very important any more, to most people.

I was in Manhattan for a while recently, for instance, and plotted out a course of visits to bookshops all over the city. What I discovered in my perambulations around (and mostly underneath) the island was that if I wanted, say the nineteenth-century American occult, French medieval manuscripts, or a first *Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, I was in the right place; the specialty shops survive, up seedy staircases, down nasty halls, and sometimes behind massive steel doors with sliding panels and triple locks. Also, behind massive prices and investment counselors. But the general bookstore, the chancy, adventuresome shop with rangy sections for poetry, fiction, history, theosophy, life and letters, fine editions, numbers theory, archaeology, and what have you, seemed,

when you could find one, barely to be holding on. The shops were lonely, desolate places, with erratic hours; and the condition of their books perhaps emblematic—sad, battered, worn, greasy, raggle-taggle victims of an undeclared civil war. One old man at a store in the East Nineties told me crabbedly, "All the other stores have moved out, and I'm being stolen blind, and I don't have anyone to talk to any more." As I bought *More Letters* of Darwin from him, he thought he had to chase from his store two scruffy young men, explaining to me: "Addicts, you know—they robbed old—blind too, before he gave it up and went to Queens." Even after one excepted the Manhattan paranoia (the garbage strike is caused by the addicts, also the smog), it seemed the old-fashioned bookshop wasn't doing too well. "It will be a pleasure," I told myself after hearing a number of such tales, "to get back to Don Bloch's Collector's Center in Denver."

But the Collector's Center, certainly the finest shop in Denver, has fallen also—paradoxically, a victim first of urban renewal and then of urban neglect. Bloch, a former professor of Augustan literature, had extremely wide-ranging knowledge and tastes; and his first store on Arapahoe was beautifully stocked, especially in popular fiction of the last century and in ancient cookbooks. The store went when they tore the center of Denver down. His second location, on Ninth, was never quite as satisfactory, though his stock was as good as ever. In fact, location notwithstanding, his store has always been just the ticket, with something for almost every modest collector. Once, when I mentioned to Mr. Bloch that I was beginning to read nineteenth-century utopians, he sprang over to one of his shelves to fetch me a quite perfect 1897 paperback of Bellamy's *Equality*—Bellamy, of course, *should* be in paperback—and then gave me a bibliography of a west coast dealer becoming strong in that area. These things always happen in a store like the Center; and it was sad to see Bloch close down for good, evidently from simple want of business.

There are still many bookshops that are prospering, to be sure, even in Denver; among the unselective jumble of All Books on Fifteenth I recently acquired a good signed first of Holman Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism*. And if one can muster little hope for the crumbling shops of New York, San Francisco remains a strong book town—or rather, a town strong in the kind of bookshops I especially like, where one finds semi-old, semi-precious books. But the *knowledgeable* bookshop, the bookshop that is also a literary shop, does seem to be in decline in this country; and that takes some of the zest out of collecting. One can get a reprint, or an AMS facsimile, or a paperback edition of almost anything now, anyhow; and there are many books that are treasures, like the Mark Twain Papers from California or the Boswell Papers from Yale. But the latter kind of book is increasingly sold at a price only institutions can afford, as if the private collector no longer existed (which is probably truer than one likes to admit); and somehow reprint editions just aren't as pleasing as a volume that has passed through many hands and has a kind of history, half the pleasure of which has been in the chasing down or the finding, and in the conversation over the counter. And so my library- and castle-building does not go exactly apace these days; and I wonder what it will be like when the Christopher Morleyan kind of shop I have frequented has become merely a romantic spectre, haunting an occasional Ritson's *Ancient Songs and Ballads* or a Robinson's *Diary* on my shelves.

### LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

THE CLUB has just purchased a reasonably good copy of *Early Typography*, by William Skeen, the Government printer at Colombo, Ceylon, and published there in 1872. Since we had noted in previous purchases, "not listed in Bigmore & Wyman" this book is (page 364) and noted as a "creditable specimen of typography" and a "good deal of fresh interest" on the subject. It is the first learned book on the subject we own from the Far East. A.S.

## ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

THE two classifications of membership above Regular Membership are Patron Memberships, \$125 a year, and Sustaining Memberships, \$50 a year. The following have entered the Club as Sustaining Members:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
GEORGE ALLEN	Los Angeles	Warren R. Howell
HENRY SCHNIEWIND	Locust Valley, N.Y.	Lewis Allen
ALLEN SEGAL	Vancouver, B.C.	John Windle

The following have changed from Regular to Sustaining Membership:

DAVID E. BELCH	Orinda
GEORGE COYLE BRIGGS	Lafayette
MR. & MRS. JOHN CLASS	Huntington Beach
MRS. STUART COFFING	Sacramento
ROBERT D. PEPPER	Palo Alto
JOHN SABATH	San Francisco
JAKE ZEITLIN	Los Angeles

### New Honorary Member:

VALENTI ANGELO San Francisco

The following have been elected to Membership since the publication of the Winter News-Letter:

**DEAN STEVEN COREY** San Francisco      **Wm. P. Barlow, Jr.**  
**DAVID W. FORBES** San Francisco      **John Windle**

WILLIAM A. GRAF	Iowa City, Iowa	Michael Harrison
JOSHUA HELLER	Worcester, S. Africa	Membership Committee
NORMA P. INGELL	El Cerrito	A. H. Brandenburg, Jr.
FRED RUE JACOBS	Keene	Membership Committee
THEODORE B. KAHLE	Berkeley	Paul Ogden
SANDRA D. KIRSHENBAUM	San Francisco	Gale Herrick
GORDON B. MOTT	St. Paul, Minn.	James K. Laurie
ANDREW T. NADEL, M.D.	Sacramento	Membership Committee
RICHARD C. OTTER	Belvedere	David F. Myrick
EDWARD PETKO, M.D.	Los Angeles	Rev. Francis J. Weber
JAMES R. REED	St. Louis, Mo.	Membership Committee
J. C. RUSSEL	Lincoln, Nebraska	Univ. of Nebraska
TOM TAYLOR	Austin, Texas	Warren R. Howell
DONALD E. WERBY	San Francisco	Rudolph Lapp
SAUSALITO PUBLIC LIBRARY	Sausalito	Membership Committee

## LIBRARY NOTES

THE CLUB is indebted to Director Franklin Gilliam for a gift of a most uncommon book—design-wise. When we first learned of this production, we sent to the printer-publisher only to find that the book was over-sold. So, then, this happy gift, a most welcome addition to our library, is a bibliography of the books designed by W. A. Dwiggins (1880–1956), designed and compiled by Dwight Agner and printed by him on a hand press at the press he calls The Press of the Nightowl in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is a handsomely produced book and quite well printed in an edition of only 190 copies. The book is handset in Eric Gill's *Joanna* typeface—for the same reason that Miss Abbe had to use a non-WAD type, since all of Dwiggins' typefaces were cut for the Linotype. This is a tall quarto of 90 some-odd pages, cased in one-half cloth with French marbled paper sides and stamped in gold.

If this is the first effort of this printer-publisher, collectors can look for a healthy and well-deserved publishing life. We are delighted to have this book as an example of fine printing—and more, if possible, as a working bibliography for our reference library.

A.S.

## SERENDIPITY

DR. James D. Hart, former President and Director of The Book Club and presently Director of the world-renowned Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley, delivered the Third Annual Maury A. Bromsen Lecture in Humanistic Bibliography at The Boston Public Library, May 3rd. The purpose of the Bromsen lectureship is to "invite annually a distinguished scholar to deliver a public lecture in the field of bibliography, emphasizing the humanistic rather than the descriptive character of his subject." The address was on the theme "New Englanders in Nova Albion: Some Nineteenth Century Views of California."

FOR members of the Club who live in New York and other communities on the east coast who seldom get an opportunity to view the exhibits in San Francisco, the 20th Annual Anniversary Exhibit of Book Plates designed for members of The Book Club will be on display in the libraries of the Suffolk Cooperative Library System from June 1975 through January 1976.

THE Yale University Library Associates are sponsoring an Exhibition of Book-bindings and Decorated Papers by members of The Guild of Book Workers in The Arts of the Book Room, Sterling Memorial Library, May 15 to June 30. The Book Club is pleased to announce that President Leah Wollenberg and Director Gale Herrick have examples of their bookbinding on view in this exhibit.

MEMBERS are encouraged to visit our Club Rooms and browse through the library which is open Monday 11-7, Tuesday through Friday 2-5.

*Come All Ye . . .*

IN February there was held in Glasgow one of the most fascinating exhibitions of Broadsides, Broadsheets, Chapbooks, Songsheets, Poemcards, Private Press

Ephemera and Street Literature. It was probably the largest of its kind ever assembled in Scotland and coincided with the 800th anniversary of that city.

Entitled *Come All Ye . . .*, the exhibition dealt with a rich variety of printed examples of the street pedlars—squibs, chapbooks, battledores, circulars, songsheets, poems, advertisements and almanacks varying from the sophisticated, spectacular and the highly professional down through the pretentious, pompous and pedestrian to the bungling, the ludicrous and the half-witted. The whole subject is a fascinating sphere of this strange phenomenon outside the realm of books, but eminently collectable nevertheless.

The exhibition was entitled *Come All Ye . . .* because so many printed ballads began with those words, a heralding call, an oral focusing of attention, and it is exactly this that the exhibition did in a way which was exciting and highly commendable. The work represented was from Ireland, Scotland and England and of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and included examples of the work of the famous "Hawkie" Cameron, a printing pedlar who had only one foot and hobbled about on crutches to which he nailed his wares. There were children's books by Davison of Alnwick illustrated by Thomas Bewick; and Brudekin of York, Crawford of Kilmarnock and Catnach of London, along with many others, were also well represented.

Among present-day examples were those of Mike Absolom, John Foreman (the Broadsheet King), the Cog Press, the Brewhouse Press, the Cuala Press (reprints) and a complete collection of Toni Savage of Leicester, already well known to readers of this Quarterly. There were also many sheets by private presses produced just for this exhibition which were distributed there, and one, a poem by Stephen Mulrine, *A Gude Buke*, was spectacularly printed in the exhibition itself on an Arab machine by a man 6' 3" tall and wearing a bowler hat, celluloid collar and cuffs, a monocle and green eye shield.

What is the point of this now that the exhibition is closed? A splendid catalogue was published by the Foulis Archive Press, and this will prove to be of increasing value as a source of reference. It is limited to 600 copies, lavishly illustrated and contains a very useful bibliography. As an introduction to the subject it is both guide and handbook. As a reference work for the knowledgeable it gives an interesting slant on the picture as seen today and reveals areas hitherto little documented—particularly work of the *Poet's Box*, a fascinating collection which promises to be the subject of further study and publication by John Tomlinson who staged the exhibition.

Copies of the ordinary catalogue in print at £2.50 (post and packing included), and there is to be a special edition shortly. Posters, broadsheets,

single slips, photographs and other information as well as catalogues are available from John Tomlinson, Foulis Archive Press, 167 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, Scotland, who will be delighted to send to any Book Club of California member.

*Rigby Graham*

MR. JACKSON BURKE, a former San Franciscan and then operator of his own private press, recently sold his incomparable printing collection to Dawson's in Los Angeles. This collection, possibly the largest in private hands, is being offered in three catalogues; Part I, "History" has already been distributed; Part II, "Forms" (type specimens and type design) will be issued for \$3.00 sent first class mail in late June, and Part III, "Use" (printing manuals, technical works and examples of printing) later this year.

Part II, which will be current when this Quarterly is issued, has more than 445 items; of these 155 will be typefounders' specimen books from every great foundry in the United States, Great Britain and the Continent. It will also include 60 volumes on calligraphy and lettering, and 30 books printed in exotic types. The catalogue was printed by Grant Dahlstrom in letterpress. (*As we go to press we learn of the death of Jackson Burke in New York.*)

DIRECTOR Richard Dillon's new book, *Siskiyou Trail* is now available at your local bookstore. "This latest in the American Trail Series is a lively, offbeat history of a largely neglected subject: the opening of a land route from what is now the state of Washington to California." *Publisher's Weekly*. (McGraw-Hill, \$8.95.)

AURIFODINA, the Club's Fall 1974 publication, has been selected as one of the Fifty Books of the Year by the American Institute of Graphic Arts. The book's printer, Andrew Hoyem, is being honored with an exhibition of the work of his press at the AIGA, 1059 Third Avenue, New York City, during the month of June.

AN AUCTION of duplicate press books and reference works in the graphic arts from the Special Collections Department of the San Francisco Public Library was conducted on May 18 by the Friends of the Library. The sale was very successful: 352 lots brought \$19,000 for the Special Collections Fund. Priced catalogues are available from the Friends Office, Main Library, Civic Center, San Francisco 94102, at \$3.00 per copy.

## ANNUAL MEETING

1975

THE Annual Meeting of The Book Club of California was held Tuesday, March 18, at 11:30 a.m. in the Club Rooms. President Warren R. Howell presided. Reports covering the year's activities were given, and the President expressed his appreciation to officers, directors and committee chairmen for their support.

Of the five directors whose terms were expiring, Mr. Harry Goff, Mr. David Magee and Mr. Norman Strouse were not eligible for re-election. Mr. Warren Howell and Mrs. David Potter were re-elected and Mr. Richard Dillon, Mrs. R. F. Ferguson and Mr. Franklin Gilliam were elected, thus completing the slate of directors for the term expiring March, 1978.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Board of Directors met for election of officers. Mrs. Harold Wollenberg was elected President, Mr. Joseph Bransten was re-elected Vice-President, Mr. Wm. P. Barlow, Jr. was re-elected Treasurer.

The following committees have been appointed to serve for the year:

*Exhibits:* Albert Sperisen (Chairperson), Duncan Olmsted, Gary Kurutz.

*Library:* Dr. R. S. Speck (Chairperson), Albert Sperisen, Barbara Land.

*Finance:* Wm. P. Barlow, Jr. (Chairperson), Lewis Allen, Henry Bowles, John Borden, Mrs. David Potter, Florian J. Shasky, Gale Herrick.

*House:* Mrs. David Potter (Chairperson), Dorothy Whitnah, Mark Hanrahan.

*Keepsakes:* Franklin Gilliam (Chairperson), Oscar Lewis, Roby Wentz.

*Membership:* Joseph Bransten (Chairperson), Dr. Albert Shumate, Earl Adams, Franklin Gilliam, Michael Harrison, Warren R. Howell, Gary Kurutz, Norman Strouse.

*Publications:* Florian J. Shasky (Chairperson), John Borden, Richard Dillon, Mrs. R. F. Ferguson, Franklin Gilliam, James Hart, Oscar Lewis, David Magee, Warren R. Howell, Albert Sperisen.

*Quarterly News-Letter:* John Borden (Editor-in-Chief), Richard Dillon, Oscar Lewis, David Magee, Albert Sperisen, John Windle.

*Slipcases:* Lewis Allen (Chairperson).

### A BELATED REVIEW, AND AN APOLOGY

*This review should have appeared in the last issue of the Quarterly, but, due to a misunderstanding between the editor and reviewer, it did not. We regret this very much and the embarrassment it may have caused . . . mostly ours.*

THROUGH a chance remark made by our retired Executive Secretary Betty Downs when visiting Dorothy Abbe at her home, the Book Club became the possessor of possibly the most significant book it has received! This magnificent gift is one of only four copies—in five volumes—of *Dwiggins' Marionettes*. It was written, designed, set in type, printed and illustrated by Dorothy Abbe. An incredible *tour de force* by one petite lady, a discerning disciple of that great artist, W. A. Dwiggins. (The making of this unusual work and the publication of it were described and reviewed in our Winter issue, 1970—albeit with an unfortunate title error.)

The exhibition of this notable five-volume work was delayed too long, mostly because of earlier exhibit commitments and finally because of the Book Club's year-long tribute to the Grabhorns. Finally, and at long last, the Book Club started the year 1975 with a two-month exhibition and an Open House on February 3 to honor Dorothy Abbe who journeyed here from her home in Hingham, Massachusetts for this event. It was a gala evening with the five volumes exhibited in a way to illustrate her magnificent craftsmanship and her attention to detail which personifies all of Miss Abbe's work. The sixty-six color transparencies (only a few could be shown), mounted ingeniously with a foil backer, allowed a viewer to see something of the "other art" of Miss Abbe—her remarkable photography. For this exhibition, she loaned the fourth copy of the book—a now disjoined copy which had been used to produce the "trade" edition reviewed in 1970—for easy page-showing, as well as photographs of her printing shop and photography lab. Copies of a charmingly produced monograph on Dwiggins, being a talk Dorothy Abbe gave to the *Book Builders of Boston* and which the Boston Public Library published in 1974, were sent to the Book Club to coincide with the Open House—and these copies were presented to those who attended. (Another gracious gift.)

It is relatively easy to assess the subject of this five-volume work as another remarkable facet of a remarkable man—and we tried to do just that in our initial review. But the real greatness of this work is in Dorothy Abbe's con-

tribution to book making—a dedication which is nothing short of a "work of love." This, unfortunately, says nothing of the book or of her making it. But where to begin? If we start with the bindings of these five volumes (times four!), which is a likely beginning, we see Miss Abbe as an innovator-creator of a method which has no counterpart. The copies, with their sixty-six color transparencies plus their special backings and almost 400 (outstanding) photographic prints, of necessity had to be mounted on a heavy stock—in this case, a five-ply Strathmore cover. These pages then had to be separately hinged and sewn to a backing, a process which Dorothy Abbe innovated. Then they were boxed (slip-cases) with built-in runners at the bottom and back of each to support the weight of these pages—another Abbe invention!

Although W. A. Dwiggins designed many typefaces (and one of these would have been the obvious choice for this work), none of these many typefaces was ever cut for commercial hand composition. So, Miss Abbe chose foundry Bulmer type and literally wrote the copy in the stick. As she said, ". . . a good way for an author to keep down wordage is to set and print his own copy." These sheets measure eleven by almost fourteen inches and were printed by Dorothy Abbe on an 8 x 12-inch Chandler & Price press! The four copies, of five volumes each, took her the better part of five years' work, over a ten-year period!

Is it any wonder then that this reviewer finds it difficult to properly review a work that is in itself unique, and one of such magnitude? These five volumes are *epic*, and any doubting Thomas may see them at the Club Rooms—the seeing is believing.

ALBERT SPERISEN

## TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS YOUNG:

*Caslon Old Style typeface, an exhibition*

WILLIAM CASLON cut his first type punches in 1722. His famous Old Style typeface was cut and marketed in 1725, the design having been based on a contemporary Dutch typeface. (Stanley Morison says that this Dutch original was a version made by Garamond after a roman used by Aldus in 1495.) Caslon's first type specimen sheet was issued in 1734, and his type was introduced in America during the first decades of the Colonial Government. The Club's facsimile of the *Constitution* as printed by Taylor & Taylor from

English Caslon is typical of Colonial printing . . . although better printed. We have also exhibited two original examples of Ben Franklin's use of Caslon: his *Poor Richard's Almanac*, loaned to us from the Robert Grabhorn collection at the S. F. Public Library, and, from David Magee, a title page from *Minutes of Conferences held at Easton in October, 1758*, which was printed at Philadelphia. Also, a facsimile, printed at Williamsburg, of *Typographia, an Ode on Printing*, a typical example of "Colonial" printing.

When Caslon's Old Style was made available to English printers, it became an instantaneous success—and it held its popularity until the end of the eighteenth century when taste and fashion changed with the introduction of a modern letter-form designed by Bodoni in Italy and one by Didot in France. Unfortunately, the exaggerated "improvements" made by copyists and imitators on these new letter-forms resulted in the unhappy horrors which typified most of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century type faces and "fashion" printing.

In 1844, English bookseller and publisher William Pickering asked Caslon to supply an old style letter for a projected edition of *Juvenal* which he planned to publish. Although the type was set for this work, it was not the first to use the reissued Caslon Old Style type. Charles Whittingham of the Chiswick Press had this honor. His *Diary of Lady Willoughby*, published by Longmans in April 1844 in an edition of 750 copies, preceded the *Juvenal* by almost a year. The *Diary* became a runaway best seller and an additional 1000 copies in a second printing were made and sold before the end of that year. In 1845, a smaller version was published in an edition of 500 copies. The quaint design of this "new" typographic concept so captivated printers and publishers, and the public, that every typefoundry in England copied Caslon's Old Style letter so carefully that it is difficult today to distinguish between the original and the imitations.

But, after almost 250 years—with a short time out for the "moderns"—Caslon Old Style typeface is still a favorite among fine printers the world over—and it is perhaps a record for a type design. Today, it is not only used successfully to recreate a printing period, but, in the hands of a fine printer, its timelessness has the feel of a contemporary modern letter-form. For example, Caslon Old Style has been the exclusive typeface for many of the famous private presses: The Hours Press of Paris, The Hogarth Press, the Beaumont Press, the Three Mountains Press (of Paris), Cuala Press of Ireland, and all of the books printed by the Golden Cockerel Press prior to 1931. This is also true of the St. Dominic's Press, and Caslon was the favorite

typeface of Bernard Newdigate at his Arden Press and later for the many fine books he produced at the Shakespeare Head Press.

In this exhibition, we have also included noteworthy examples of the use of this "most successful typeface" by such presses as The Ashendene, The Nonesuch, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, The Cranach Press, Essex House Press, Updike at his Merrymount Press, Bruce Rogers' work, Emery Walker, the Grabhorns, Colt Press, John Henry Nash, and 24 lesser known fine printers. And we did not ignore the early master printers who reintroduced Caslon Old Style in America. These were: The Gillis Press, De Vinne, Will Bradley at his Wayside Press, Stone & Kimball, Murdock, and Rollins. Finally, we managed a few interesting examples of eighteenth century book work—Strawberry Hill's *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble of England, etc., Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for six Poems by Mr. T. Gray* as published by Dodsley, and a title page from the first edition (Vol. 1) of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.

ALBERT SPERISEN

## REVIEW

BOOK CLUB member Alan Wofsy has recently published a reprint of G. S. Tomkinson's *Bibliography of Modern Presses*. This edition is reproduced by offset in two colors throughout in a slightly smaller format. The type size remains the same, only the margins have been made smaller. It is cased in hard covers in a simulated leather, stamped in gold. This standard reference work, often described as the most valuable guide on the subject, was first published by The First Editions Club of London and has since become rather hard to come by, and costly in any condition. Recently, Dawson's of Pall Mall announced they were planning to reprint this same work. When they discovered that Mr. Wofsy had the book in hand, they negotiated with him to distribute his edition in the UK. The Alan Wofsy edition can be had for \$20 plus tax and may be ordered from the publisher or through your bookseller. The Dawson's of Pall Mall edition is available at £9.50.

ALBERT SPERISEN

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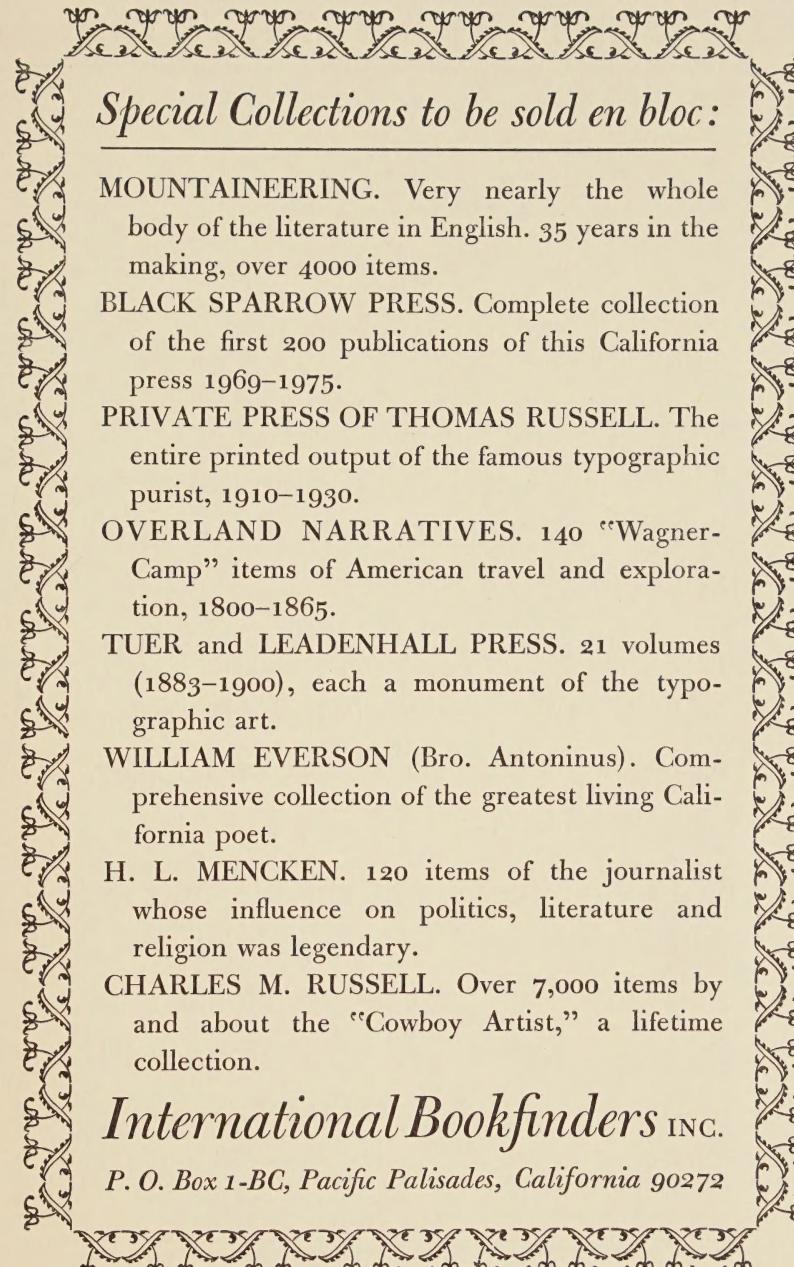
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# The Book Club of California

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June, 1975

DEAR MEMBERS:

At its April meeting, the Board of Directors voted to increase dues effective July 1, 1975 to \$30.00 for Regular membership and to \$50.00 and \$125.00 for Sustaining and Patron memberships. In this inflationary period, dues increases are often greeted with a sense of inevitability, but I can assure you that the Board acted only after considering every alternative. This letter will explain the necessity for the action and, at the same time, make an appeal.

For the past three years the Club has operated at a deficit in the general fund as rapidly increasing costs cut into a fixed income. While every effort has been made to control our expenses and to supplement income by encouraging members to increase their dues categories, the accumulated deficit over the past three years has amounted to nearly \$10.00 per member. Projections for the current and succeeding years without a change in the dues rate, indicate a deficit of \$20.00 per member for the two-year period.

The Board has agreed that to cut expenses enough to eliminate this deficit would sacrifice the quality of service the Club provides and that to recover these deficits through a surcharge on sales of publications would be equally untenable. Although the dues increase is substantial on a percentage basis, it is the smallest amount consistent with fiscal responsibility. I believe you will agree that the dues still represent a real value.

I mentioned that I also intended to make an appeal, and here it is. Sustaining and Patron members represent more than one out of every six of our members. Their special support of the Club is essential to our continued existence. I would like to thank each of these members for their contributions in the past and urge that they retain their special status at this critical period. At the same time I urge each of you in the Regular dues category to consider a step up at this time.

Members are reminded that dues are deductible for tax purposes to the extent permitted by law.

*Sincerely yours,*

*Mrs Harold A. Wollenberg*

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